

Letter from Taizé

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Ljubljana: a first East-West European Meeting

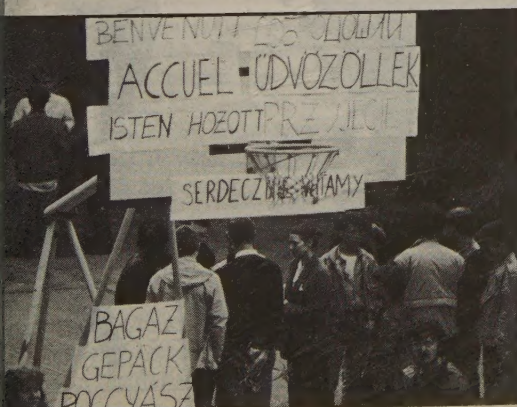
Ljubljana, 1-3 May, 1987: The ring of mountains around the capital of Slovenia was still bright with snow. A few days of sunshine had brought the vineyards out into flower. More than a thousand young people from different parts of Western Europe were beginning to discover a part of continental Europe which is so often forgotten. There too: of course the Slovenes offering a warm welcome, but also young adults from all the other parts of Yugoslavia and, as well, Poles and Hungarians, who had never come to such a meeting in such numbers before. Even East Germany and Czechoslovakia were represented.

First of all, everyone was welcomed on arrival at the university theology faculty. The old buildings that day looked like a desert caravan: rucksacks piled up under the arches, steaming tea was served up to those who were arriving after night-long journey, and groups sat in the classrooms and outside listening to explanations about the meeting. Then they were met with the generous welcome of the families who had opened their door — a welcome which went far beyond what was strictly necessary. In the sixty parishes involved in the meeting, the times of prayer and meetings in small groups gave an opportunity to discover the life of a Christian community in Slovenia.

The four common prayers during the meeting, held simultaneously in two big churches and a marquee, made it possible to understand something unique about it: the Slavonic languages (Polish, Serbocroat, Slovene, Macedonian) were dominant in the liturgy. There were also prayers in Hungarian and Albanian. And, for many participants, a whole unknown world was revealed all at once: what a miracle to be able to share, in the praise of the Risen Christ, something so important and common to all, though we knew each other so little.

During the first common prayer, while explaining the reason for holding the meeting, Brother Roger said, "It is a great happiness to be together in Yugoslavia with young people from all the republics of the country. If my heart were to try to express in words all that it feels for the Yugoslavs, it would take days and days. What are we seeking together? We are seeking to understand that the mysterious presence of the Risen Christ is there in every one of us. Some among us say to themselves: Where is the Risen Christ? I want to assure you of this: Christ is so present for each human being that, since his resurrection, he is at the side of every person without exception. In each person Christ places a unique gift: that of being a bearer of his presence. So his Gospel becomes like an inner kingdom."

After the meeting was over, everyone who had been involved in preparing it was astonished that this first "East-West" meeting had gone without any complications or incidents. That it could happen at all was a surprise. And that it proved to be possible to ask for the cooperation of the public transport, to organise special trains and obtain a special telephone line to link two churches appeared to some people to be incredible! And something else happened as well: the event was widely known outside the walls of the churches, it was picked up by the papers and even the television stations to such an extent that those who were preparing the meeting found, in their schools or work-places, that people were interested to hear everything about the meeting.



Inter-continental meetings

At the end of June, Intercontinental Meetings started at Taizé. Many of the participants from other continents are spending a short while in various regions of Europe to see something of the life of Christian communities. More than seventy young Indians are coming during the course of the summer and others are from even further away, Chile and the Philippines for example.

In their own countries, they have been preparing to come as pilgrims. Someone from Mysore in India writes "I have a deep urge to pray faithfully and meaningfully and to become one with Christ; I am finding it very difficult because I get bored and tired and my mind wanders. At first I wanted to go to Taizé in expectation of sight-seeing, but after thinking about it and the sessions of prayer we have had to prepare for it, I now want to take it as a pilgrimage. I trust and believe it will be something that transforms my life so that I will come back to India with confidence and courage."

Three themes have been singled out for particular attention during this summer's meetings and they have been becoming clearer during the last few weeks. The first concerns the search for peace and trust between the peoples of the world, in particular with reference to contacts with the United Nations. The second is the theme of the inner life. The third springs from a question formulated at Easter: how can we involve ourselves with creative eagerness in a new evangelization? We want to consider this question both from the point of view of our own daily lives and also to see how local church communities, basic communities and parishes, can respond. And we will try to see how contacts between the continents can play a part in this new evangelization.

Answers to our questioning

"It is in the inner life that answers to our questioning are prepared" (Living Springs) — the suggestion of "Johannine Hours" (see page 6) is one way of pursuing practically the implications of this phrase. At Taizé it is a possibility now offered every week. Having taken part in one of the Johannine Hours, many people will be able to return to their home communities and invite people around them to participate in a similar inner search, setting aside a few hours from time.

Answers in our lives grow out of prayer and silence and very often begin by outwardly unspectacular decisions and choices. The call to be bearers of the joyful news of the Risen Christ can be illustrated by these words written in Mexico: "Young people in this country who discover Christ, make the link between the new life which begins for them individually and the wider life of the whole Church." Many people are seeking to formulate for themselves how their life is being transformed and also how, in different, even unique, ways for each person, their life is a part of the life of a whole people. Linking our life and destiny to that of the Church is in fact placing ourselves at the service of others with the good of our whole lives.

In prayer and silence, with the help of Biblical introduction and the possibility to speak personally with a brother or sister, other essential questions will be raised during this summer at Taizé: How can we renew our hope? How can we live with hearts that are clear, simple and unified? How can we draw upon forgiveness in order to go beyond the consequences of division as quickly as possible?



○○○○○ **In the community of the Church**

By a multitude of individual lives the face of the Church is changed, and the letter "Living Springs" describes this as a springtime of the Church, apparent wherever the spirit of mercy humanizes our heart in the light of compassionate love." How can we stimulate compassionate, brotherly love in our Christian communities? During the summer, all those who have experience of small basic communities and groups are making suggestions, and we are thinking how such communities can be a leaven of communion within the larger local church communities, the parishes.

Participating in the construction of the unique communion of the Church will certainly also mean seeking forms of prayer together which, by their simplicity and beauty, are celebrations of the presence of the Risen Christ ■

A mystery of communion

During the "pilgrimage of trust on earth", small pilgrimages, to places close at hand, have often been suggested. Often the experience of having made a visit far away, or of having taken part in a meeting with people of other countries can give us the imagination we need for such small pilgrimages. A letter from Germany writes:

I have been struck by the sentence in "Living Springs" which says, "The Church is a mystery of communion which begins right where one lives". These words correspond to the experience I have had over the last couple of years. By going to make visits to churches and groups in various countries, I first learned what it means to be travelling as a pilgrim in order to learn about the situation of Christians in other places.

This went even further when, in summer 1985, I left with a French friend to go to make visits in India. Our experience really was one of a "pilgrimage of trust", for neither of us had ever been outside Europe before, and we didn't know who was going to welcome us, or when, where or how! So our joy at the far-reaching Indian welcome and at seeing the confident hope and involvement of Christians, even in the most hopeless situations, was perhaps even greater than it would otherwise have been. We discovered a Church which is trying hard to find a place of reconciliation and to find its identity in the Indian culture.

○○○○○ **Intercontinental initiatives**

During the summer "intercontinental initiatives" are being put forward: they will be practical suggestions for sharing. They will always involve both the sharing of material things and also the sharing of skills, human riches and faith.

Here are some examples which could be put into practice near to home or far away:

- A small team composed of people from different continents could spend six months together, living in an area of human need, with a regular common prayer and welcoming those who come.
- Local church communities sending people out, two by two, after a time of preparation, on a series of little "pilgrimages" to visit other Christian communities. Those who have only a few days could undertake this near where they live.
- Respond to the "Call of Puebla" for the Church to make it a "priority to go towards the poor and the young" by, for example, choosing for oneself a course of studies or training which will lead to such an involvement.
- For children: groups of children can undertake to exchange letters and drawings with children on another continent. ■

As we visited, we started seeing our own home churches in a different light. By comparison with the reality in India, many European problems began to seem secondary, but some questions, such as sharing with one another, seeking a simplicity of life-style and being open and ready to welcome strangers became, on the contrary, even more urgent.

Now, in the city where I live, we are preparing to hold a Sunday afternoon during which there will be many visits to immigrant communities so that we will know the situation of immigrants better. To prepare these visits, we are going beforehand, in twos and threes, to every place to meet people and to ask if they are willing for us to return with a whole group. Once a week, we gather to pray in the cathedral in the city-centre, and afterwards we meet for a while to tell each other how the visiting has been going.

Going to visit people one doesn't know, there where they are trying to live out the Gospel, is a very simple gesture. It is easy not even to think of it when one is looking for something to foster a deeper sense of communion in the Church. I've noticed several times, in my own parish, that for people to understand I needed to explain in detail what happens during such visits to parishes, other communities or to people's homes, and say why I consider them to be so important.

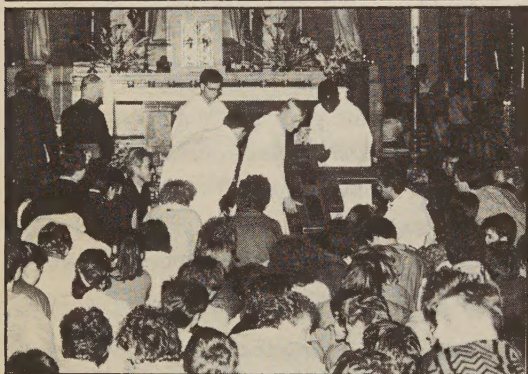
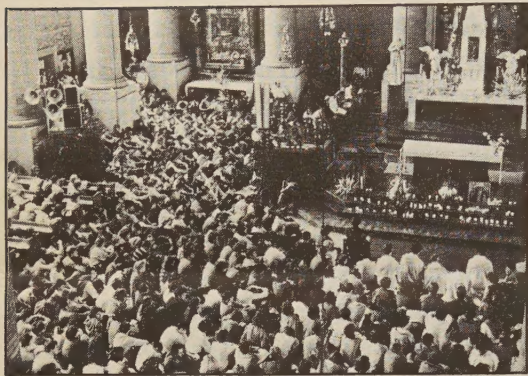
Why do our parishes so rarely correspond to what we hope for? Why is there so little sense of their being places of meeting and learning from one another; places where people who are different, but who know themselves to be united by one same hope, share together? Is it because we are living at a time when there is a strong tendency towards individualism and mistrust rather than towards the experience of meeting in community? ■

Although perhaps the non-Yugoslav participants did not realize in the fact that a thousand participants came to Ljubljana from other Yugoslav republics was also something new and a sign of hope and reconciliation. As one young Slovene who helped prepare the meeting said, "We had a secret anxiety about how the meeting would go with those from other republics. Afterwards, we were delighted to see they had always been very warmly welcomed by the families with whom they stayed. The bus journeys together, in and out of the city centre, also strengthened friendships. It was as if our regular prayers together, over the weekend, was bearing its first fruits." Contact between the different republics which comprise the federation of Yugoslavia are usually limited to sport and the sphere of politics. Those who come from the poorer, southern republics to look for work in the north find it difficult to integrate into society there. Yugoslavia is like a mosaic of nations and minorities inextricably linked by the events — often violent events — of history. It is a situation where different peoples live alongside each other, "in parallel" each one keeping a vivid sense of its own particularities. A few of those who "came up" from the south for the meeting had already taken part in Taizé meetings, but most of them were joining in the pilgrimage for the first time: the Catholics and Orthodox Christians from Skopje in Macedonia, the young Albanians from Kosovo, Hungarians and Slovaks from Vojvodina, people from Sarajevo and Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina. For many of them, going to Ljubljana was like going to a foreign country! And at the same time, although the families in Ljubljana were very much looking forward to welcoming participants from Northern Europe, it was an act of trust on their part to open their doors to all the participants, wherever they came from.

For the young Slovenes in and around Ljubljana, getting ready to welcome participants to their parishes was quite a commitment. First it was necessary to visit families and invite them to a preparatory meeting. Then, in each parish a small team prepared a weekly common prayer, and these prayers have continued after the meeting as well: "At first, there were very few of us in our village church each Monday evening. Then others appeared and we have discovered that there are a lot of young people in the parish." Someone from Kranj, thirty kilometres from Ljubljana, said, "I never thought that I would discover so many fine things through this meeting. I thought at the start that I'd just stay around as an onlooker but I came to feel that I should take part fully. During the weeks before the meeting and through the weekend itself, we have grown closer to one another. I now know my parish better now. I know that many of us are seeking the meaning of our lives in God. An attentiveness to the old people who live in our district has been developed. It's been important not just for me, but for the whole parish, I think."

Those who came from other countries, months in advance, to help prepare the meeting were able to discover "from within" the treasure of human values and faith present in the various peoples of Yugoslavia: a capacity for enthusiasm and great generosity and trustfulness. Their traditions of popular prayer, of hymns, of hospitality, of sharing with those in need, have a freshness and an evangelical force. As far as young Christians are concerned, perhaps the most remarkable things are their love for the Church and the concern and care they show for their elders who, through times of suffering, have communicated the faith to them. Young Christians know that these "values" are important for the future of their country, their culture and their Christian communities. They are trying to come to grips with new challenges and the rapid evolution of their way of life. They want to share these values with non-believers and with those who are searching, both within their country and beyond.

As the Ljubljana meeting drew to a close, Brother Roger gave to understand that this first East-West meeting would not be without sequel and that, in the future, other countries may be able to hold such a meeting: "We may have a quiet certainty that this first meeting, involving young Christians and non-believers too, is only a first step."



Meditating on the word September

When Jesus speaks in a parable about sowing, the growth and the maturing of the wheat, he speaks of a reality which all his listeners know well. We can easily imagine the farming people of Galilee nodding with understanding as he was describing difficulties like stony ground, brambles and birds eating up the freshly sown seed. But Jesus calls attention to something else: He makes us notice that the birds, stones and thorns do not count for much in the face of the life-force which is in the seeds and which gives a good harvest even though not all the field has good soil. The sower who has sown widely without worrying too much where the seed will fall has nothing to fear, at harvest-time there will be an abundant crop.

The "secret of the Kingdom of God" (Mk 4.11) is in one way visible and known to all: from the time of Jesus up to the present day, the Gospel has been widely announced, openly, in both favourable and unfavourable situations. And just as the loss of the seeds which fall on the wayside is observed before the harvest which will spring from the good soil, so also the indifference or superficial welcome with which the Gospel has often been greeted is visible before the harvest which is produced where it has been accepted with generosity. Jesus' parable makes us see something which, because it is not immediately apparent, we could easily overlook: in the Gospel there is a life-force, the Holy Spirit, which produces a good harvest in all the good soil he finds. The word of the Gospel comes to live deep within every human being. Jesus' parable calls us to place our trust in the Gospel as being a word of creation.

What does the parable tell us about the way in which God is making his Kingdom come in our world? What harvest has already come from the word of the Gospel, sown by Christ and by all the Church — in those around me, in my own life, in the history of the world and that of my own country? Can this parable help us not to become discouraged by all that we see, both in us and around us, which is in opposition to the Gospel.

1 Tue Isaiah 51.12-16
Philippians 1.3-6
John the Baptist came as is written in the book of Isaiah: A voice of one that cries in the desert: Prepare a way for the Lord, make straight his paths! **Luke 3.1-6**

2 Wed Is 52.7-10
Ph 1.7-11
John the Baptist said to the people: Anyone who has two tunics must share with the one who has none, and anyone who has something to eat must do the same. **Lk 3.7-14**

3 Thu Is 52.13-15
Ph 1.12-19
John the Baptist said: I baptise you with water, but one is coming who will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **Lk 3.15-20**

4 Fri Ph 1.20-26
Lk 3.21-22
The servant of the Lord bore our suffering, and we are healed by his wounds. **Is 53.1-5**

5 Sat Lk 4.1-13
We had all gone astray like sheep, each of us taking their own path. The Lord made our faults bear upon his servant, who, when he was ill-treated, did not open his mouth. **Is 53.6-9**

6 SUN Ezekiel 33.7-9
Matthew 18.15-20
Paul writes: Love does no harm to our neighbour, and so love is the fulfilment of the Law. **Romans 13.8-10**

7 Mon Is 53.10-12
Lk 4.14-22a
Stand firm, united in spirit, striving together with one heart for the faith of the Gospel. **Ph 1.27-30**

8 Tue Is 54.1-6
Ph 2.1-4
Mary said: The merciful love of the Lord stretches from age to age upon those who revere him. He has filled the hungry with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. **Lk 1.46-55**

9 Wed Ph 2.5-11
Lk 4.22b-30
With great compassion I will unite you to me, says the Lord, your redeemer. **Is 54.7-8,10**

10 Thu Ph 2.12-18
Lk 4.38-44
The Lord says to his people: You will be founded in justice and free from oppression: fear will no longer have any hold upon you. **Is 54.11-14**

11 Fri Is 55.1-3
Lk 5.1-11
Paul writes: We find our glory in Christ Jesus, instead of placing our confidence in what is worldly. **Ph 3.1a,3b-9**

12 Sat Is 55.6-9
Large crowds gathered in order to hear Jesus and to be healed of their sicknesses. But he would go off to some deserted place and pray. **Lk 5.12-16**

13 SUN Ecclesiasticus 28.2-7
Rm 14.7-9
Peter asked Jesus, "How many times should I forgive my brother? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "Not seven times, I tell you, but seventy-seven." **Mt 18.21-35**

14 Mon Is 55.10-13
Lk 5.17-26
Paul writes: I do not consider myself to have already arrived; but forgetting all that lies behind and straining towards what lies ahead, I run towards the goal. **Ph 3.10-16**

15 Tue Ph 3.17-4.1
Lk 5.27-32
The Lord says: Let the stranger who has come to the Lord not say, "For sure, the Lord will exclude me from his people." For all who love the God's name and become his servants, all who cling to my covenant, I shall lead to my holy mountain and give them joy. **Is 56.1-7**

16 Wed Is 57.14-19
Lk 5.33-39
Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice! **Ph 4.4-7**

17 Thu Is 58.5-8
Ph 4.8-14
At that time, Jesus went up into the hills to pray, and he spent the whole night praying to God. **Lk 6.12-19**

18 Fri 1 Peter 1.1-5
Lk 6.20-23
If you do away with the accusing finger, if you take from what is yours to give to the poor, then your light will rise in the darkness and the night will become for you like the middle of the day. **Is 58.9b-11**

19 Sat Is 60.1-5
Jesus said: Treat others in the same way that you would like them to treat you. **Lk 6.27-35**

20 SUN Ph 1.20-27
Mt 20.1-16
Our God is rich in forgiveness. For, thus says the Lord: Your thoughts are not my thoughts, your ways are not my ways. **Is 55.6-9**

Johannine hours are suggested as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer, in the midst of our life at home. During the course of the day (if possible, two days in the same week) take a couple of hours to read the Bible passages with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, the group (3 to 10 people) meet together to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

21 Mon Ephesians 4.7-13
Lk 6.36-38
ST MATTHEW
As he passed, Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax-collectors office, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. **Mt 9.9-13**

22 Tue Is 60.17b-20
Lk 6.39-45
Peter writes: Without having seen Christ Jesus, you love him. **1 P 1.6-12**

23 Wed Is 61.1-3
Lk 6.46-49
After the model of the Holy One who has called you, be holy yourselves in all that you do. **1 P 1.13-16**

24 Thu 1 P 1.17-21
Lk 7.1-10
As the earth sends up its shoots and a garden makes seeds sprout, so the Lord makes justice and praise spring up in the sight of all nations. **Is 61.10-11**

25 Fri Is 62.1-5
Lk 7.11-17
Love each other deeply, from the heart. **1 P 1.22-25**

26 Sat Is 62.10-12
Lk 7.18-23
Lord, you teach me the way of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy. **Ps 16**

27 SUN Ezekiel 18.25-28
Mt 21.28-32
Paul writes: Have the same love, be one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition. **Ph 2.1-11**

28 Mon Is 65.17-25
Lk 7.24-28
Come to Christ, the living stone, who is rejected by men but chosen and precious in God's sight. **1 P 2.1-6**

29 Tue 1 P 2.9-12
Lk 7.36-43
The Lord says: Look, I am sending my peace, flowing like a river towards my people. **Is 66.12-14a**

30 Wed 1 Chronicles 29.10,13-15a
Lk 7.44-50
When Christ was insulted, he did not return the insult; when he was suffering he made no threats but placed his trust in the One who judges justly. **1 P 2.19-25**

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

Meditating on the word

October

Johannine Hours

Luke 8.16-17

1 Thu 1 Chronicles 29.17-18
Luke 8.1-8
Peter writes: Do not repay evil for evil. Seek peace and pursue it.
1 Peter 3.8-11

2 Fri Nehemiah 1.7-10
Lk 8.11-15
Peter writes: If you suffer for what is right then you are blessed! Do not fear. Simply proclaim the Lord Christ holy in your hearts.
1 P 3.13-17

3 Sat Lk 8.16-17
Do not be sad or afflicted: the joy of God is your strength.
Ne 8.3,8-10

4 SUN Isaiah 5.1-7
Matthew 21.33-43
Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let God know your desires.
Philippians 4.6-9

5 Mon 1 P 3.18-22
Lk 8.19-21
Lord, in your great compassion, you did not abandon your people in the desert: the pillar of cloud did not cease to lead them by day, nor did the pillar of fire cease to light their way by night.
Ne 9.17-19

6 Tue Ecclesiastes 3.9-11, 13 1 P 4.1-2, 6
Lk 8.22-25
Of you, Lord, my heart has said, "Seek his face!"
Ps 27

7 Wed Ecclesiastes 7.8b-10, 9.7-8
Lk 8.38-42
Peter writes: Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over many a sin.
1 P 4.7-11

8 Thu Ecclesiasticus (Si) 2.1-6
Lk 8.43-48
Peter writes: In so far as you share in the sufferings of Christ, be glad, so that when his glory is revealed, you will be filled with joy and gladness.
1 P 4.12-14

9 Fri 1 P 5.1-5
Lk 8.49-56
You who revere the Lord, trust in him, await his good gifts: everlasting joy and mercy.
Si 2.7-11

10 Sat Lk 9.1-6
Deliver the oppressed from the hands of the oppressor and do not be cowardly in acting justly. And you will be like a child of the Most High who will love you more than your own mother does.
Si 4.9-10

11 SUN Ph 4.12-20
Mt 22.1-10
The Lord has destroyed the veil of mourning which covered all peoples. He has destroyed death for ever.
Is 25.6-9

12 Mon Si 14.1-16
Lk 9.10-17
Clothe yourselves in humility towards one another, for God gives his grace to the humble.
1 P 5.6-11

13 Tue Si 15.11-18
Lk 9.18-22
Paul writes: Praised be God who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.
2 Corinthians 1.1-6

14 Wed 2 Cor 1.7-11
Lk 9.23-27
God created human beings in his image; he has placed his light in their hearts.
Si 17.1-12

15 Thu Si 18.8-13
Lk 9.28-36
Paul writes: Christ was never Yes-and-No; his nature is all Yes. For in him is found the Yes to all God's promises.
2 Cor 1.12-22

16 Fri 2 Cor 2.14-17
Lk 9.37-45
Forgive your neighbour any wrongs. For if someone nurses anger against another, how can they then ask for healing from God?
Si 28.2-7

17 Sat Si 30.21-23
Jesus said: Anyone who welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.
Lk 9.46-50

18 SUN 1 Thessalonians 1.1-5
Mt 22.15-21
ST LUKE
The Lord says: Though you did not know me, I have called you by your name.
Is 45.1-6

19 Mon Si 34.12-17
Lk 9.51-62
God has made us able to be servants of a new covenant, a covenant not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills but the Spirit gives life.
2 Cor 3.1-8

20 Tue Si 35.17-24
Lk 10.1-3
Paul writes: All of us, with our unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the image that we reflect.
2 Cor 3.16-18

21 Wed Nahum 1.7-8a
Lk 10.4-11, 16
Paul writes: We do not proclaim ourselves, but Christ Jesus as the Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.
2 Cor 4.1-5

22 Thu 2 Cor 4.6-12
Lk 10.17-22
The compassion of God is renewed every morning; his faithfulness is great. It is good to await in silence the salvation of the Lord.
Lamentations 3.22-26

23 Fri 2 Cor 4.13-18
Lk 10.23-28
You came near when I called to you, Lord, and you said, "Do not fear."
Lm 3.55-58

24 Sat Lk 10.29-37
Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely upon your own understanding.
Proverbs 3.3-7

25 SUN 1 Th 1.5b-10
Mt 22.34-40
The Lord says to his people: Do not oppress the stranger, for you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt
Exodus 22.20-26

26 Mon Pr 3.27-31
2 Cor 5.1-7
Jesus said to Martha: You are worried and anxious about many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one.
Lk 10.38-42

27 Tue 2 Cor 5.11-15
Lk 11.1-4
The path of the just is like the light of dawn which shines ever brighter until the full light of day.
Pr 4.18, 20-27

28 Wed Pr 8.22-23, 27-31
2 Cor 5.16-21
Jesus said: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.
Lk 11.15-13

29 Thu Pr 16.9, 19-20, 32
Lk 11.14-20
Paul writes: We are considered sad, we who are always joyful; we are considered to have nothing, we who possess everything.
2 Cor 6.1-10

30 Fri 2 Cor 7.5-7
Lk 11.23, 27-28
Do not let your heart be envious, but remain steady in adoring God, for there is a future and your hope will not come to nothing.
Pr 23.15-18

31 Sat Pr 30.5-9
Jesus said: No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Rather they put it on its stand so that those who enter may see the light.
Lk 11.33-36

At the time of Jesus, the houses in Galilee all had earthenware oil lamps. The task of lighting or putting out one of these house-lamps was among the jobs which counted as work forbidden to do on the Sabbath! Obviously, it would be absurd to light a lamp only in order to extinguish it immediately by covering it with a bowl (it seems that "putting a lamp under a bowl", a container likewise used for measuring grain or flour, was the usual way of extinguishing a lamp, so as to avoid smoke). Though it may be possible, albeit absurd, to extinguish a lamp which one has just lit, it is impossible for light itself not to shine. This is what Jesus adds to the parable of the lamp when he says, "Nothing is hidden but it will be made clear." (v 17)

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is like a lamp which God has lit. Christ is the first bearer of the Good News, he is Gospel himself. Thus he never let himself be stopped along the way of announcing the Kingdom of God. When people wanted him to stay in Capernaum, the village where he had stayed for a while, he answered that he had to move on, and announce the Good News elsewhere: that was why he had come (Mt 1.37-38). When he was advised not to go to Jerusalem to bear witness to God, he said, "I must go on" (Lk 13.33). Jesus knew that he was a lighted lamp (he said, "I am the light of the world", Jn 8.12), and he made the choice not to put out or hide his light. We are all bearers of the Gospel too, lighted lamps. As Christ said, "You are the light of the world" (Mt 5.14). And just as a lamp which does not give light is worthless, it is not possible to bear the name of Christ without him shining through us, by our lives. The light of the Gospel, borne by Christ and by Christians cannot remain hidden.

What does it mean for me, and for the local Christian community, to be a lighted lamp? What does it mean not to put out or hide the light which God lit in that lamp? Which words of Christ can I receive as a light for my life? Am I able to make this light visible for others?

A part from the remains of ancient times, what is the most striking thing about the city of Rome? Perhaps it could be the churches of the city which make us think of all the Christians who have prayed there from the very early days of the Church. The lives of some of them have been a lasting witness for the Church.

Or perhaps, for those who venture beyond the city-centre, it could be the large neighbourhoods where the Church has almost no visible presence, where, very often, parish congregations gather on Sunday in temporary huts or "garages". There are districts, too, where the new population is rootless and where Christian communities are building themselves up, conscious of being missionaries.

And one last astonishing thing is the continual flow of pilgrims from all over the world. These pilgrims often seem to be simply tourists, but they can also discover something of the universal nature of the Church.

All these elements will be present as we prepare to hold the next European Meeting in Rome. It will be a meeting in which the memory of the first Christians and martyrs, the discovery of a Church involved in mission to its own city and its vocation to universality will help us to renew our search for life in Christ and to root it in prayer.

The next Letter from Taizé will contain all the practical indications and registration form for the European Meeting (28 December 1987 to 2 January 1988). [Group travel by charter plane is being arranged from the UK - Approx. cost: £110 return. If you are hoping to go, or if your parish or group is going to send someone, then indicate your interest in group travel, as soon as possible, to Bob Metcalf, St Peter's Tours Ltd, 4 Penerley Road, LONDON SE6 2LQ Tel: 01 698 3788 Telex: 268506 (ATOL 1536)]



On a journey together

The European Meeting will be like travelling a part of our journey together — not only for those who come from outside Rome, but also for those who welcome us. Participants will be welcomed, for the most part, by families throughout the city, and three mornings during the meeting will be spent in the parishes with local people. For the last year, the churches of Rome have been preparing for a diocesan synod with the theme "Communion and Mission". People in all the parishes have been asked to think about and reply to some questions which aim to make the synod a time of dialogue and clearer understanding. Thus, the communities which we will visit at the end of the year are also "on a journey".

Someone from Rome told us recently: "In our small community, which includes both young people and families with children, we meet twice a week to pray together. That prayer is fundamental to finding a space of contemplation in the chaos of the big city. On Sunday morning, the Eucharist celebrated in the parish expresses the unity between many groups similar to ours. At present, some groups are trying to form a parish "Caritas" group to undertake community service in the neighbourhood, and there are already many links with other people of goodwill. In some other districts advice centres have been opened where it is a question of listening to those who come to see which form of help is best adapted to their needs. A lot of young people have offered to help with this: they are concerned to show solidarity with the unemployed, with those from cultural minorities and with the sick."

Placing oneself at the service of the poor means being a bearer of joyful news, a bearer of the Gospel which Jesus reveals among us. Many Christians in Rome feel the need to rediscover the Gospel and to bear witness to it to others. During the preparation for the diocesan synod, it has emerged that one way in which the parishes there want to bear witness is by their universality: an openness which is made possible by deep communion. And the bishop of Rome, the Pope, said this to the parish priests: "We need to make an effort, not only at the local, parish level but also more widely, to build community within the Church in Rome. Perhaps we can think about this Greek word "synod" which designates different roads which converge and merge into one."

Risen Jesus,
even when hesitations or doubts seem to take over everything,
you are there for every person without exception,
you watch and pray in us.

You want to transfigure human beings
by giving them something of your own face.
And so even our inner struggles become wellsprings of life.

NEWS

THAILAND

"On returning to Thailand after the Madras meeting, we wanted to continue the pilgrimage of trust. We looked for activities with a new approach of "come and see". The main objective was to find concrete commitment to build up relationships of trust, among ourselves and among different groups. So "Emmaus Youth Group" was born. As a basis for prayer and reflection, we translated two Letters from Taizé into Thai. Then there have been formation activities called "Solidarity Saturdays" which involve the coming together of the young as a small community. Usually a diversity of origin is visible as they come from different provinces. These "Solidarity Saturdays" are days of sharing and praying together. One scene to illustrate this solidarity was to be among the poorest of the poor in urban or rural life and to sit and share prayerful moments with them. There and then, the young were helped to discover the presence of Christ among the situations of wrongdoing, exploitation and even cruelty. "This pilgrimage has to continue" was one of the common resolutions of the participants after the Madras meeting. It was because it had fostered communion among the participants. It was also because it was characterized by flexibility and, above all, it was a pilgrimage sustained by personal prayer."

INDIA

One of the Indians, a youth worker, coming to Taizé this summer wrote, "At the meeting in Madras, I received a lot of experiences from sharing with my fellow people who are struggling hard to carry on their life in spite of their poor conditions. The sharing of different cultures, the hospitality of the people, attracted me. I hadn't attended such a gathering of the people of God ever before. I hope that my experience at Taizé will influence me and help me to give myself to my work with young people in Kerala better than before."

YUGOSLAVIA

Once the East-West Meeting was over we were faced with the difficult task of continuing where we are, with those who know us. We went and spent a Sunday together in a parish in a village. We were also invited to travel to Sarajevo in Bosnia to return the visit of those whom we hosted as pilgrims in May. This is very significant as the tensions between the different nations are growing stronger and stronger. I think it is up to us Christians to improve these contacts bet-

ween the peoples of Yugoslavia. We draw the courage for moving forward on the pilgrimage of trust from our daily common prayer. It is surprising to see so many people participating, particularly on Fridays for the prayer around the cross.

BERLIN

A group of people in West Berlin recently decided to create a centre of welcome open to local residents. They don't have many resources and the centre is very simple, just a few rooms: "We opened two weeks ago. The day before we started we had the last minute idea of celebrating the opening and we told our friends and neighbours. Even though everything was so spontaneous and improvised about sixty people came: a mixture of Yugoslavs, Kurds and Turks, a Sudanese man with his 2 year old child, a friend from Canada, Europeans, young and old, families and single people, Christians, Muslims and non-believers. Since then, the centre has been open every afternoon. We make tea or coffee, but anyone can also go to the kitchen to cook themselves a meal. There is no price-list because many of those who come have nothing to pay with and also because we want the centre to have the feel of an open community for which each person bears a responsibility. Everyone puts what they want into the kitty. If the coffee runs out, for example, there won't be any more until someone brings some or else puts some money in the kitty to buy it. It was a very poor family who first brought something for the centre.

The other day, two Turkish children came and played all afternoon. When their mother came, we found out that the whole family she, her husband and six children live in one room. The next day the two children came back with their two year old brother and played with the other children. It's been a joyful experience of Christ's words when he says we will be given children, mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters a hundred times over!

Last Sunday some of us got together to talk and we decided to have a prayer every evening in the centre. For me, it has already become something that is essential. In it, I find the peace I need in order to remain open and welcoming, and whether we are two or ten, we can hold all the different people we meet in the centre in our prayer."

ZIMBABWE

"In our district of Harare, we have begun a regular common prayer for the all the Churches together. At the start, we decided on two things: firstly to ask forgiveness for our divisions, secondly to affirm our faith in the Risen Christ. We have formed a group composed of members of different churches to go to visit every family in the neighbourhood and more especially those who are alone or in difficulty, to help them make contact with their parishes again.

After six months, we are already seeing what good this has done our communities. We have been learning, often with much difficulty, to start to look towards other people and to communicate with people different from ourselves."

FRANCE

"During the two years that we have lived with "Missions to Seamen" what a lot of discoveries we have made! The other day a Norwegian pastor told us that a crew from the Philippines would like us to visit. We found the boat right at the end of the docks. They had had an accident at sea, one of them had been killed. They asked us if we would come to celebrate the mass on the ship. Four of us went back, very early in the morning, before work. It was a beautiful moment and something that reminded us again how important it is to welcome the sailors in our port: their human dignity is not often respected. Their "nomadic" life is difficult — they are often away from their families for months, sometimes even years. They are so thankful when they find a place of welcome and a family atmosphere."

Another experience was our preparation for Christmas. The children of the district had made presents to give to the sailors a long time before to be opened on Christmas Day, perhaps on the other side of the world. For those who were in port a vigil had been prepared with hymns and readings in a multitude of different languages. Thus, without much in the way of material resources, it was possible for some to overcome their melancholy at not having seen their families for so long."

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION (1987)

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